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ABSTRACT

This speech describes the management by objectives program initiated by the Office of Education and shows how the implementation of such a program in institutions and school systems could assist them to become accountable to their constituencies. A related document is EA 003 885. (JF)

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ACCOUNTABILITY: A CONSTRUCTIVE FORCE IN EDUCATION

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Being a recent refugee from the U. S. Office of Education, I have a very keen interest in the topic of educational accountability. This interest may be a bit hardened and cynical as an outgrowth of my experiences in the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Since OE is a part of this huge department and since HEW has been widely acclaimed as an unmanageable bureaucracy, accountability has been the main theme and battle cry in Washington lately. Education Commissioners James E. Allen, Jr. and Sidney P. Marland, Jr. have pushed hard to bring the discipline of management by objectives into the U. S. Office of Education. My remarks to you reflect the influence of HEW MBO programs on my work while in OE. You may be interested in this as background information for what I want to say later in my presentation.

I joined the U. S. Office of Education at the invitation of the late Commissioner Jim Allen following a conversation with Secretary Finch. The conversation with the Secretary was prompted by my concern that HEW was truly an unmanageable agency, that matters were in a state of disarray at the time the invitation was tendered to me, and that some dramatic changes, including replacement of Allen, would be made in the U. S. Office of Education. The assurances from Secretary Finch that Commissioner Allen was in good standing with the Administration and

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that I would be joining a well organized and efficiently managed agency lasted for only two months after I reported for work in Washington. At that time, Secretary Finch was moved to the White House staff and Commissioner Allen was asked to resign as the United States Commissioner of Education. My confidence in the management efficiency and decision making accountability of HEW was further shaken when the new secretary, Elliott Richardson, asked me to assume the duties of Acting Commissioner. Needless to say, with only two months on the Washington scene, I hardly knew how to find my way to my office, let alone assume the awesome responsibilities of management of the U. S. Office of Education.

Accountability for other promises seemed to slip as I found myself serving for six months after being assured that it would take only a month to six weeks to get a new commissioner selected and in place in the Office of Education.

During those days in OE we were deeply involved with the other agencies that comprised the totality of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in a management by objectives program. In this effort we were all being led by the famous Fredrick Malek (the performance accountability genius who made millions in business) under a system of operational planning and results oriented management that was touted to be the strong medicine that would correct the bureaucratic ailments of HEW. Malek was so successful in his efforts that he was subsequently moved to the White House staff as a management and performance accountability expert.

Needless to say, this attempt to bring performanced based management and to spread the spirit of accountability throughout HEW generated a great amount of frustration and resistance. At the time I left OE considerable progress had been made with a number of key leaders in the Office of Education gaining confidence and competence in operational planning. During this time, I became a convert to management by objectives. Performance accountability has much to offer to educational institutions.

The entire accountability movement in education has emerged from deep disillusionment on the part of the public with the outputs and end results of education. As educational leaders we have inclined to over sell and to make commitments that could not be met. A good example of this is found in the results of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Testimony given to Congress in 1965 alleged that we could compensate in the classroom for failure in the home and neighborhood. Educators made some quite lavish educational performance claims that were never realized. Compensatory education became a new theme, and we were certain that disadvantaged and minority students could find equal opportunity and could attain levels of educational attainment more commensurate with that of the great middle class group of Americans. School leaders wanted the money and a chance to show that education could truly bring a new social order in American life. Several years and billions and billions of dollars later, we realized that student accomplishment in our great urban centers and among our minority student population had not improved significantly.

Another new theme that came along at this time was sold under the banner of innovation. We had too much confidence that we could invent new methods and

approaches that would dramatically improve the effectiveness of education. Under the stimulation of millions of federal dollars we have witnessed a wave of innovative projects producing doubtful outcomes and inconclusive findings. The results have been very disappointing. From my experience in defending OE budgets before congressional committees I can give you first hand testimony that Congress is very skeptical and critical over the performance of experimental programs funded by Congress.

These high expectations followed by disappointing results have led to various forms of public outrage directed toward education on the higher and public school levels. This, in turn, has led to more demands for accountability. We witness the great interest in performance audits as an outgrowth of these disappointments.

Many of these frustrations and concerns came out in two conferences on educational accountability sponsored by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey last March. As a participant and contributor of one of the position papers, I was impressed with the interest in the topic. These conferences, held in Washington, D. C. and Los Angeles, involved a number of scholars who had written extensively on the subject of educational accountability. This distinguished panel of experts concluded that accountability in education as currently being emphasized was a natural outgrowth from the disappointments and frustrations related to our high aspirations and failures in utilizing education as a means of bringing about important social changes in our society. The group also emphasized that accountability implied at the outset that education must

determine performance objectives and state them in understandable terms. The conference concluded that if this initial precept failed to receive sufficient cognizance that all else in the quest for accountability would fail.

It then followed, from the Educational Testing Service conferences, that a very sophisticated understanding of evaluation would be necessary. This should lead to criterion reference tests for the evaluation of individual progress of students. It should also lead, the ETS conference concluded, to evaluation of instructional materials and applying the rules of accountability to cover the entire spectrum of the teaching and learning process.

At these conferences, I recall specifically that Mr. Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers for New York City, emphasized that accountability was very much feared by teachers. Right or wrong, Shanker emphasized that accountability as being preached around the country strcssed the view of the teacher as being a hired hand. He emphasized that it was insulting to teachers because it raised the question "How do you know we are getting our money's worth?" This, according to Shanker, led to impossible parental demands that were unfair to teachers. Sadly enough, educational accountability has been interpreted as focusing on teachers more than on any other aspect of education.

As I see it, the entire recent emphasis upon educational accountability has had negative overtones that have generated responses like those from Albert Shanker. The quest has not emphasized enough the positive pursuit of educational excellence through enlightened inquiry and objective management of educational processes. Too much of the emphasis has been on the blame fixing,

fault finding, and the seeking out of the allegedly incompetent. Teachers look upon accountability as a witch hunting effort.

If the accountability movement in education is to become a truly positive force we must shift from blame fixing to the optimism of goal setting and operational planning that leads us under a "can do" spirit to reach some highly desirable objectives in education. Our outlook should be to find more of what is right and the examination of what is wrong should be made with a viewpoint of getting feed back that can correct and make our operations more efficient. This is contrasted to the demerit and witch hunt approach.

In my earlier reference to the management by objectives system not utilized by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare I indicated that the general attitude has shifted to a more positive level. This came about after the new Secretary, Elliot Richardson, brought new optimism and positive thinking into the department. This led to a new focus for the accountability system. It became a reinforcing mechanism and a vehicle for citing outstanding accomplishment and recognition for work well done. The HEW effort helped leaders to see that they could manage more effectively under a system that was performance based and results oriented.

So I would emphasize that the leadership responsibilities attendant with educational accountability programs must set the general tone and shift the focus to building up and reinforcing and giving positive recognition.

Perhaps the greatest benefit from an educational institution's quest for accountability comes from the sense of progress and awareness of accomplishment. Inherent in any accountability effort is the absolute necessity that management set some performance priorities. It then follows that some detailed, time-phased action steps must be developed. This must be followed by firm allocation of resources. Resultant from all of this on any college campus or in any school district operational procedure will come an awareness of problems that should be solved and priorities that emphasize what is important and what is of lesser importance to an educational institution. Naturally, this compels managers to make some difficult decisions and to take some precise positions on some controversial issues. Tough decisions that are delayed because of threat to the decision maker are forced to timely resolution in an MBC system.

Educational accountability implies operational planning and operational management. It calls for results oriented management. It calls for output preoccupation, and it eliminates much of the petty process bickering so common to so many college campuses and school districts.

An educational accountability system commits an institution to manage itself by objectives. And a system of management by objectives, if properly implemented with involvement of the staff, should create a sense of unity and team work in the institution. This usually happens because the accountability has to start at the top. The first man put on the spot is the college President or Superintendent of Schools.

Results oriented management assures the staff that the educational institution is aware of its problems and is concentrating on solutions. Administrative tyranny and pettiness become quickly identified under an accountability, management by objectives system. More emphasis is placed on participatory management. This, in turn, generates interest because progress is well known. This sense of momentum causes enthusiasm and can be a great morale builder. When goals are committed to writing and when the commitment is accompanied by detailed, time-phased action steps, the operations become more open and interest in reaching objectives becomes a team goal.

From my own personal experience in working with a management by objectives system I know that the important questions get out on the table and delicate issues cannot be so easily swept under the rug. Such a system requires an educational institution to describe the gaps that exist between what is and what had ought to be. It requires that educational institutions state their objectives by describing them in outcome and results oriented terms. The language for doing this calls for measurable and quantifiable terminology. Problems are quantified with objective data. Plain and descriptive language universally understood by many is forced out of this situation. Managers have to respond to such questions as:

1. What per cent are below what standards?
2. How many students need what results to attain what desired outcome?

3. What exists that ought to be changed and is changeable by means of a reasonable and attainable effort?
4. With scarce resources, how can we allocate them to get the largest gains?

The very process of identifying performance priorities and being accountable for their accomplishment leads to an open system of management. Many team members must become involved. There must be concensus on the goals to be reached. In the operational management process of striving to reach goals performance review discussions are held. All of this leads to a wholesome openness and to some aspects of participatory management.

Results oriented management in education asks simple but powerful questions such as: Who does what? What are the time frames? What means and what ends are being sought? Is this problem really worth the effort to solve it? With scarce resources and heavy demands, what are the priorities? Where can we make large gains at low cost and effort expenditure?

All of this naturally tends to eliminate the pet project and the low priority program that may have existed for a long time simply because some individual resting in a highly placed chair wants it that way. Egos and ego feeding have a rough time under a management by objectives system generated out of a genuine quest for educational accountability.

It is hard to persist in doing something simply because "we have always done it that way." This is particularly true when the display of results oriented

management spreads itself into all aspects of the operation of an educational institution. Testimony from the lower ranking bureaucrats in the U. S. Office of Education convinced me of the truth of this. OE's MBO program led the agency away from pet projects and decisions for patronage and friendship reasons.

The trite statement: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there," becomes emphatically true to most people who have operational experience in a results oriented management by objectives program of performance accountability. We are currently in the process of installing such a system in the Granite School District in Salt Lake City. Even at this initial stage I can give testimony to its verility in bringing about educational renewal, true participatory management, and an open system where performance counts more than personality.

So, in its broadest sense, the basic theme of this conference "Accountability: A Constructive Force In Education," is a very timely topic worthy, as I see it, of the most serious consideration of all participants. Used constructively and administered democratically, an educational accountability system will generate untold educational dividends for any educational institution willing to meet the frustrations and pay the price in toil required to master the true transition to a system of management by objectives.

Accountability is an <u>in</u> word in education, and I believe it will be a very dynamic word in our vocabulary for years to come.

Thank you.